United Nations E/CN.5/2008/NGO/17

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 November 2007

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-sixth session
6-15 February 2008
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Global Youth Action Network, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

07-61241 (E) 121207

Statement

Introduction

1. In today's labour market, young people represent approximately 25% of the global workforce, yet 43.7% of the world's unemployed.[1] Those employed find that jobs available to youth are low paid, insecure, and with few benefits or prospects for advancement.[2] These conditions severely limit global poverty reduction and threaten to waste the potential of the largest, most educated and most connected generation of young people the world has ever known.

2. The Global Youth Action Network conducted an electronic consultation with its member organizations on the state of youth employment, involving more than a hundred young representatives of youth organizations from thirty-four countries, in both English and French.[3] Their summarized ideas and suggestions on promoting employment and decent work follow, and we urge Governments to integrate the recommendations in the development of national action plans on employment.

Education and Training

3. Participants are not naïve in their appraisal of their educational systems and recognize that employment opportunities are linked to macroeconomic realities. A participant from Bangladesh commented that *"Educational systems can't remove [the] unemployment problem. Where there is a shortage of jobs then what can the educational system do?"* Still, participants feel that a more flexible education system with more focus on practical, relevant skills would better prepare students for their entrance into the work force.

4. Participants recommend that government and private institutions improve their effectiveness by matching education and training to opportunities within the current and future job markets. This demands greater research and understanding, and should also include entrepreneurial possibilities. In the words of a participant from Nigeria: "*The schools can improve the transition from school to work through comprehensive training and research program on the current job market in producing worthy candidates for the current job targets.*"

5. Many participants request greater support of youth entrepreneurship, and increased access to existing micro-credit programs. From Ghana, a participant states *"Job creating should not be the sole responsibility of government ...the government's responsibility in job creation is to create an enabling environment and structure that facilitate and support entrepreneurship development."*

6. Finally, many participants would like a flexible approach in which apprenticeships, internships, and job placement opportunities are more frequently incorporated into the educational system. Improving the links between students and employers can greatly smooth the transition from

[1] International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for youth, 2006.
[2] Youth Employment Network, 2006
[3] For a full archive of messages and a list of participants, please visit: http://groups.takingitglobal.org/gyanemployment and http://groups.takingitglobal.org/GYANemploi.

school to work. At the very least, participants asked that their governments provide young people with useful and accurate information about the current job market, including the informal sector.

National Policies

7. Participants indicate that their countries have national programs to encourage youth employment, and that many of these have done some good. However, a participant from the Congo reported that *"It's not by a lack of methods in African countries but a lack of the practical implementation of these methods."* They were concerned that most young people had no idea such programs existed and wanted to see greater publicity of these programs so that more young people can participate and hold those involved accountable to successful implementation.

8. During the 45th session of the Commission for Social Development, many discussed the exciting possibilities of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). These possibilities can only by realized with serious investment and coordinated government support. Participants would like to see their governments invest in cheaper, faster, and more widespread internet access. Many mentioned the possibilities of internet access to connect people and spread information. A participant from Cameroon noted: *"We need also and not at least a complete and free access to the internet in order to learn from others and establish partnership with international non governmental organizations."*

9. Recommendations

Considering the suggestions of the youth consultation we recommend:

1. **More skills training – The educational system should to a larger extent include the choice of skills and vocational training, and should be better matched with current and future employment opportunities.**

2. **Support for youth entrepreneurship - National action plans and educational systems should promote youth entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills. Young people need increased access and reduced barriers to micro-credit programs.**

3. **Employment preparation - There should be more and better preparation for the transition from education to employment, including a greater integration of internships, apprenticeships, and job placement opportunities in the educational system. Youth need to be given realistic and accurate information about their current national job market, including the informal sector.**

4. **Implementation and awareness of existing programs - National programs for promoting youth employment should be expanded, and involve youth in the planning. Current programs need to be better publicized to increase access and accountability.**

5. **Increased access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) - Governments should invest in increased access to ICTs for young people, including higher transmission speeds, broader geographic access and lower costs.**